

TESTIMONY OF
KAYLA DESKUS, PARAEDUCATOR
AFSCME LOCAL "3689" (KILLINGLY PARAEDUCATORS)

**HB 6881- AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUS
RELATED TO EDUCATOR COMPENSATION AND PARAEDUCATORS**

LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
MARCH 13, 2023

Good Evening, Senator Mccorey and Representative Currey and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Kayla Deskus and I have been a Paraeducator at Killingly Public Schools for Seven years . I am here to testify in favor of HB 6881- AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUS RELATED TO EDUCATOR COMPENSATION AND PARAEDUCATORS.

We as 10 month employees are not paid enough holidays within a school year. We are only paid 3 holidays meanwhile all other staff in our building get paid all holidays throughout the school year. I have worked as a ParaEducator in Killingly for 7 years and only make \$16.66 an hour. It is showing false information in these job opening advertising opportunities. It is showing starting pay for a ParaEducator of Killingly at \$19.04- \$19.88 per hour, in our current contract you have to work 25 plus years to receive a pay rate of \$19.00 per hour. Many surrounding employees are receiving a cost of living wage due to inflation in our country. How are we supposed to be able to provide for our families and selves when all our necessary needs have increased but yet our pay remains this low. An average single family member to make ends meet in today's world without a family is supposed to make \$24,000. We at Killingly don't even make half of those earnings in one year at our current pay. Not only do we not make half of this wage, an average in order to make ends meet for a single family member with no children to survive it is estimated to have an annual salary of \$32,000. Personally, I have one child to support and that is not including my husband and I. We are a family of 3. It is impossible for us to make ends meet on this salary, I feel like I can not even give any. Due to the lack of pay, it has put a burden on my family, we cannot afford to grow our family. Let me put it into perspective for you. Our son is now 3 years old, we cannot afford to pay childcare for our son and still make ends meet to survive, we have made it our new normal to learn how to go without. This is not fair to my husband and I that we try our best but still cannot provide. We both work full time and still cannot give all we would like to our child and that includes being able to afford to grow our family to give our child a sibling, which is truly devastating. For instance, at our son's child care program the tuition per week for an infant is \$310, toddler is \$280 and preschool age is \$245. Our bill for Childcare for one month is more than the mortgage of our house per month and more than what I make for income for one month. If this bill does not pass, my family and I will severely be in more hardship.

Another part of this bill that needs to pass is to let ParaEducators attend PPT meetings. We as ParaEducators know our students the best, we know their strengths and weaknesses. We are their main support system and many times their voice. We should be valued enough to

be treated equally in participating in their PPT meetings, we need to be included in these meetings to truly know the expectations of our students and how we can provide support to best do our jobs for them to be at their utmost success rate.

HB 6881- AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUS RELATED TO EDUCATOR COMPENSATION AND PARAEDUCATORS will impact my family and I greatly in order to financially afford to live in less of a hardship. I urge you to support this legislation.

ParaEducators are productive workers in the school community and give a lot of themselves to their students and their families. ParaEducators work side by side with teachers in providing Education to all of our students, but we also need to take care of ourselves and our own family. We need to be valued.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

-Kayla Deskus